

Application No. 10/728976
Amendment dated 8 March 2005
Reply to Office Action of 8 December 2004

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Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph on page 3, lines 20 - 23 starting with "The acid in step (a)..." with the following amended paragraph:

The acid in step (a) may be nitric acid. The aqueous acid solution in step (a) may comprise, without limitation, from about 10% to about 30%, from about 15% to about 30%, from about 20% to about 25%, or from about 10% to about 15%, by weight of the acid. For example, the aqueous nitric acid solution may comprise more than 22% by weight of the nitric acid, such as at least 24.15% by weight of the nitric acid. The aqueous nitric acid solution may be free of ammonium ions and aluminum. The aqueous nitric acid solution may consist only of nitric acid and water.

Please replace the paragraph on page 3, lines 25 - 30 starting with "The lignocellulosic material may be contacted with..." with the following amended paragraph:

The lignocellulosic material may be contacted with the aqueous acid solution in step (a) for at least 30 minutes, including without limitation, from about 12 hours to about 24 hours. For example, the lignocellulosic material may be contacted with the nitric acid solution for more than 200 minutes, for at least 6 hours, or for at least 12 hours. The lignocellulosic material may be contacted with the aqueous acid solution in step (a) under heat. The lignocellulosic material may be contacted with the aqueous nitric acid solution in step (a) at a temperature from about 50 °C to below the boiling point of the nitric acid.

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Please replace the paragraph on page 3, lines 32 - 37 starting with "The temperature during the second heating stage..." with the following amended paragraph:

The temperature during the second heating stage of step (b) may be, without limitation, from about 73 °C to below 100 °C or from about 90 °C to about 95 °C. The temperature during the first heating stage of step (b) may be, without limitation, up to about 75 °C, below 75 °C, from about 50 °C to about 75 °C, from about 60 °C to about 70 °C, from about 50 °C to about 60 °C, or from about 70 °C to about 75 °C. The first heating stage in step (b) may be carried out for at least 15 minutes.

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